

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 105
INTRODUCTION TO SCREEN ACTING
Units: 2.0
Semester: Spring Semester 2019
Day: Monday, 3-5:50pm
Location: MCC 108

Instructor: RODNEY TO
Office: MCC Adjunct Office
Office Hours: (Per request)
Contact Info: rodneyto@usc.edu / 917.445.1040 (m)

Course Description and Overview

This course will be an intricate study (theoretical and practicum) of the fundamentals of screen or “on-camera” acting techniques. The course will expand upon the student’s theatre foundation and also discover and implement the various techniques involved in on-camera performance. Through readings, voice/speech/movement exercises, on-camera assignments, constructive detailed notes and discourse, and analyzation of on-camera performances, students will gain the essential, foundational on-camera acting tools and techniques necessary to continue on their journey to becoming professional actors.

Learning Objectives

Throughout this course students will:

- Use neutral scene work to specify, trust, and strengthen the actor’s internal life & motivations, which is essential in their on-camera work.
- Be introduced to experts(ie. Hagen, Meisner, Stanislavski, etc.) who have laid the foundation for many standard acting techniques employed today and understand how each method will be useful in building individual on-camera technique.
- Gain specific knowledge of fundamental terminology involved in the TV, & Film space.
- Gain specific understanding of all areas behind-the-camera, all invaluable information for the actor in performance.
- Gain basic knowledge of screenwriting basics; from screenplay structure to shot list, concept to print, also pertinent to the actor in performance.
- Keep a personal *handwritten* journal which will log the student’s personal daily discoveries throughout the semester.
- Gain understanding of the true discipline that is essential to the life of an actor. We will focus on the *process* which is paramount, the *result* being inconsequential.
- Explore, explore, explore.
- Have a blast!

Supplies, Equipment, and Supplementary Materials

Required Readings & Textbook

No initial textbook is required. Various coursework and assigned material will be conferred throughout the semester.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Students will need internet access as well as access to a working digital camera. Mobile phones or tablets are desirable for easy mobility and access (*see MOBILE DEVICES' POLICY under "Additional Policies"*). Basic editing software (ie iMovie, FinalCut, etc.), access to basic sound and lighting equipment may also be useful, but *not* required.

Journal

Students are required to keep a small, *handwritten* journal* in this class. Entries will be made at the end of class - time will be set aside for this. In addition, random entries prompted by me will be made throughout the semester and *may* be subsequently read in class and incorporated into class exercises. *You will be graded on the consistency of your journaling in this course.*

*I am well aware that journals are often extremely personal and sensitive. While I will be reading journals, if there is something particularly private and personal, I ask that the actor discuss the entry with me and trust that I will respect their wishes and not read it. I will keep all journals confidential.

GRADING: Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

Grading Criteria

- The quality of work for all components (*see Grading Breakdown*) is determined by the willingness & thoroughness of the assignments, effort, class contributions, comprehension, process, follow-through, rehearsal, and the imagination displayed.
- You will *not* be graded based on "talent". Instead, you will be graded on your efforts in uncovering and fostering it. This class is *not* a competition.

Grading Scale:

A work of excellent quality / **A = 100-95, A- = 94-90**

B work of good quality / **B+ = 89-87, B = 86-83, B- = 82-80**

C work of average quality / **C+ = 79-77, C = 76-73, C- = 72-70**

D work of below average quality / **D+ = 69-67, D = 66-63, D- = 62-60**

F work of poor, inadequate quality / **F = 59 and below**

Further Grading Notes

- When the GPA falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students with EXCELLENT in-class participation. Grades will be weighted towards the negative end of the scale for those with POOR in-class participation.
- I am available to discuss work and progress at anytime.

Participation

It is impossible to emphasize enough how much you will learn from *each other*. From sitting and watching, to contributing to discussions, being available for your fellow actors/classmates is not only respectful, but necessary. Therefore *no absences or late arrivals will be allowed*. Participation is weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines.

Grading Breakdown

Scene work/On-camera assignments/Written assignments	40pts
Midterm Scene: Rehearsal, Work, & Scene	15pts
Final Scene: Rehearsal, Work, & Scene	25pts
Journal	5pts
Weekly participation (discussions, contributions, etc.)*	15pts

Total Points **100pts**

Assignment Submission Policy

Rehearsals, scene work, and class scenes will be presented in class. Written assignments will be either emailed or a hardcopy will be provided per my instruction. Filmed assignments will be screened in class. When video assignment are requested, files will be uploaded and submitted through a file-sharing program.

LATE SUBMISSION POLICY: Assignments are to be completed **by the due date & time**. Late assignments will **NOT BE ACCEPTED**. I am going to treat you like mature professionals-in-training. I expect a lot from you, as you should expect from yourselves. Timeliness in regard to attendance and deadlines is absolutely expected. Being early and prepared sure does score “bonus points” with me. I am always keeping track. Keep that in mind.

Additional Policies

- Yes, digital equipment will be used as this an on-camera class. However, **NO technology** is allowed during class **unless instructed!** Phones must be on silent and put away. Phones may only be taken out during breaks.
- Except for water, no food or drinks are allowed in class.
- All students must help with the set up and strike of every class. I will ensure time is allotted to do so.
- Always wear closed-toe shoes that are flexible and good with movement (ie sneakers, dance shoes, etc.). No flip flops or boots please - this is for your safety and comfort.
- Students must wear proper rehearsal clothes - loose fitting, comfortable clothing that you are ok moving around in. Let’s always be professional, mature, and respectful - wear nothing revealing or distasteful.
- Safety is important. Physical and emotional safety is the first rule of performance. We will be working hard to establish trust with myself and your fellow classmates. Please respect each other at all times in and out of class. Communicate freely, honestly, and frequently. However, please do not share personal class dealings and discoveries outside of class.

Acting is a craft, not unlike cobbling. A cobbler uses various techniques she/he has learned over the years to make or repair a pair of shoes. Since each pair is unique, some techniques will work and others will not. The same can be said about each acting experience. I will present to you an array of methods, techniques, and anecdotes that I have found useful in my own experience. My hope is that by the end of the course, you will have a solid understanding of what methods and tools work for you as an actor. This class is not about one's talent. Instead, it is about your willingness and commitment to learning and growing as an artist.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

*****THIS WILL CHANGE. WILL NOTIFY OF ALL CHANGES*****

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1 1/7	Intro to course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss the trajectory and expectations of the course. - Warm-up game & trust exercises. - Intro to "internal life" as it relates to actor. 	Read Hagen hand-out. Be prepared to discuss
Week 2 1/14	Introduction to Hagen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss Hagen. - Substitution - Internal life - Sense memory 	9 Questions
Week 3 1/21	MARTIN LUTHER KING	DAY	NO CLASS!!!
Week 4 1/28	Meisner wskp/ exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction to Meisner technique. - Work on REPETITION exercises, the foundation of Meisner technique. 	Read hand-out. Be prepared to discuss.

Week 5 2/4	Neutral Scene work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss neutral scene work. - Assign and rehearse neutral scenes 	REHEARSE ASSIGNED MONOLOGUES AND BE PREPARED TO PERFORM THE FOLLOWING WEEK IN CLASS!
Week 6 2/11	Intro to on-camera scene work / technique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss on-camera technique and fundamental differences between theatre, tv, & film. - Work on assigned monologues 	(TBA)
Week 7 2/18	PRESIDENTS	DAY	NO CLASS!!!
Week 8 2/25	Continue on-camera scene work / technique (cont'd)		
Week 9 3/4	On-camera scene work (cont'd)		REHEARSE ASSIGNED SCENES
Week 10 3/11	SPRING	BREAK	NO CLASSES!!!!

Week 11 3/18	Midterm / In-class scenes	SCENES WILL BE PERFORMED IN CLASS	Handout (TBA)
Week 12 3/25	Intro to Behind the Camera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss the cinematic process as it relates to the business of the actor; from idea, to sell, to air. - Discuss various positions and function behind camera. 	Handout and Below-the-Line assignment (TBA)
Week 13 4/1	Guest lecturer (TBA)		- Choose scene options to perform for FINAL.
Week 14 4/8	Final scene / discussion	- Final scenes will be discussed and assigned	
Week 15 4/15	CONTINUE WORK ON FINAL (times will be assigned)	One-on-one rehearsal time with Rodney will be assigned. (TBA)	REHEARSE! REHEARSE! REHEARSE!
Week 16 4/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAST CLASS! • FINAL Rehearsals w/ Rodney (times will be assigned) 	(LAST IN-HOUSE CLASS)	REHEARSE! REHEARSE! REHEARSE!

Final Examination Date: FRIDAY, MAY 3 from 2pm-4pm.
Location TBA

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism - presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words - is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community - such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member - can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.